

Sustainability Gains Traction in Optical Industry

Consumers Also Reprioritize as a Result of the Pandemic



BY MARGE AXELRAD / EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

NEW YORK—Taking it seriously. That's what's seemed to be happening to the subject of sustainability in this year like no other, 2020. From individuals and families to companies and businesses large and small, a new awareness of climate change, economic challenges, social causes, human vulnerability and a growing priority toward health and wellness are all factors. Many felt this way before, but the pandemic and a one-of-a-kind year has created more concern among customers about corporate social responsibility. In other words, they are concerned about companies' values and what they stand for and support.

Sustainability is a complex subject that touches many aspects of daily living. One of the most-often quoted definitions of sustainability comes from the U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

But this is manifesting in new ways. In a study released this spring in association with the the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the IBM Institute for Business Value, the authors wrote, "Sustainability has reached a tipping point. As consumers increasingly embrace social causes, they seek products and brands that align with their values. Nearly six in 10 consumers surveyed are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact. Nearly eight in 10 respondents indicate sustainability is important for them. And for those who say it is very/extremely important, over 70 percent would pay a premium of 35 percent, on average, for brands that are sustainable and environmentally responsible.

The report revealed, based on an extensive survey of respondents worldwide (they conducted a research study of 18,980 consumers in 28 countries), that 81 percent belong to one of two shopper segments: Value-driven consumers (41

percent) who want good value and Purpose-driven consumers (40 percent) who seek products and services aligned with their values. Fifty-seven percent of consumers are willing to change their purchasing habits to help reduce negative environmental impact.

Looking deeper, NRF/IBM's report explained that Purpose-driven consumers (40 percent) seek products and brands that align with their lifestyle and those with health/wellness benefits. They are willing to pay a premium for products and services that align with their values and lifestyle. Purpose-driven consumers are also willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact and care about issues such as sustainability and recycling. Europe and parts of Southeast Asia and Latin America have the biggest representation of this group. Slightly over half (51 percent) of this group report middle or above middle income.

Retail and consumer products companies around the world have been increasing their fo-

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A Growing Roster of Eyewear Companies Are Advocating Sustainability

New sustainable eyewear materials, fabrication, recycling and manufacturing technologies are still evolving. But there is one big message right now: There are going to be more and more. The wave is building to a larger scale in 2021, to serve an increased global and North American demand for new solutions.

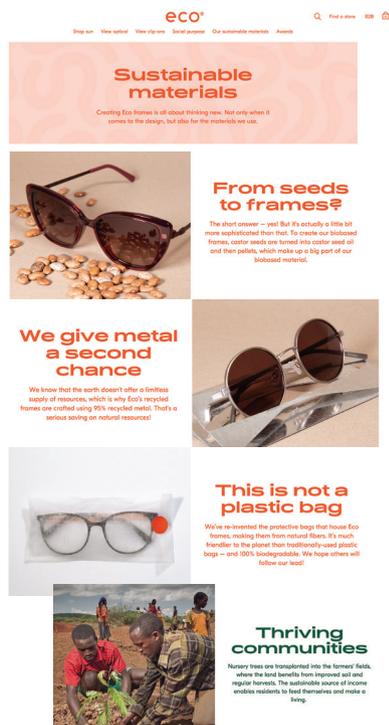
At Eastman, the company which is significantly expanding its new sustainable initiatives in eyewear manufacture (see sidebar, Page 44), Glenn Goldman, global marketing director of diversified markets, specialty plastics at Eastman Chemical, told *VM*, “We’re involved in many types of manufacturing markets, but in eyewear, the interest has been building up quickly. Even three years ago, it was rare to find many companies interested in talking about sustainability. Today, when you engage with designers and brand management companies, that’s the first thing they want to discuss now.”

These are just a few of the eyewear and sunwear companies making the push into sustainable programs, either as companies with increasing corporate commitments and or with the launch of specific collections and brands.

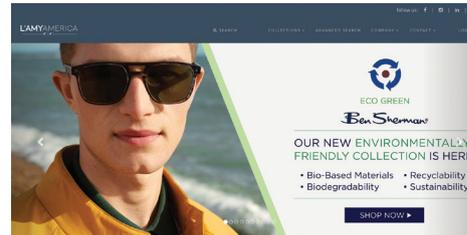
Modo Eyewear’s Eco initiative, an award-winning global program, continues to expand the range of its collections and its supporting initiatives. The company has expanded its sustainable programs for the environment and those without access. And, according to Rebecca Giefer, CEO, Modo Americas, the company will soon be launching a **new Eco Ocean series**, employing recycled and repurposed ocean plastics into a product collection in cooperation with Waste Free Oceans.

L’Amy America is debuting sun styles from its **Ben Sherman Eco** collection.

Safilo Group announced a few new initiatives just in the last few months.



Modó's ECO initiative has led the way among eyewear firms supporting sustainable goals, employing authorized materials and packaging and evolving from plastics to new metal fabrications.



L’Amy America debuted the new Eco Green collection from its Ben Sherman range this year.

the oceans. The Ocean Cleanup Sunglasses are made with injected plastic that is derived from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) and created using an innovative upcycling process that includes types of plastics which have traditionally been more difficult to recycle.



Each pair of these limited-edition sunglasses will carry a unique QR code that

Safilo Group's limited edition Ocean Cleanup Sunglasses are made with injected plastic that is derived from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP).

directly connects the user to information about the product, the project and the specific place from where the marine plastic pollution was removed. The sunglasses will be available exclusively on The Ocean



Tommy Jeans sunglasses feature Econyl nylon in partnership with Aquafil, a material soon to be used in other Safilo collections.

Cleanup website, and 100 percent of the proceeds will go toward the continuation of the cleanup mission.

In addition, in Europe, Safilo Group announced the introduction of **Econyl** regenerated nylon in its eyewear collections, thanks to a pioneering partnership with **Aquafil**, a recognized

global player with over half a century of expertise in creating synthetic fibers.

The line was recently introduced in the Tommy Jeans collection, within Tommy Hilfiger. Safilo will progressively introduce this material in its other brands' collections. “Our investment to using recycled materials

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Eyewear Companies Are Joining the Sustainability Movement

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highlights our continued efforts toward promoting a responsible business,” explained Angelo Trocchia, CEO of Safilo Group.

Marchon, along with its partnership with **Eastman’s** new recycled acetate (see sidebar, Page 44), is also expanding a sustainability program with its **Dragon** division which is debuting **Upcycled**, a new eyewear collection made from recycled plastic water bottles. Thomas Burkhardt, senior vice president of global brands, marketing and design at Marchon said, “Dragon has always been a leader in creating premium eyewear that features technical breakthroughs. In addition to this new launch, Dragon has entered into an ongoing partnership with The Surfrider Foundation on their Clean Water Initiative, which is a multi-tiered approach to combating water pollution.”

Costa, long associated with sport and leisure activities and love of the water of all types, continues to promote its efforts to support a range of programs, from its Costa and **OCEARCH** program, to its projects with Bureo to **Untangle Our Oceans**, bringing recycled plastic pellets into



Costa continues its commitment to support recycling and sustainable goals for water-related sports and lifestyle products.



The Dragon Upcycled collection of three unisex sun and three unisex optical styles, utilizes recycled, single-use plastics.

its **Untangled** Collection of sunglasses and its initiative to **Kick Plastic** and reduce waste, encouraging recycling everywhere.

Marcolin announced its company wide initiative to sponsor Positive Luxury late last year. The group initiated its Positive Luxury Awards in February of this year. Positive Luxury, founded in 2011, is “an award-winning sustainability platform that connects luxury brands with people working toward a

better future through the unique Butterfly Mark, a symbol of trust earned by brands that have adopted sustainability as a key business principle,” Marcolin Group stated.

The Positive Luxury Awards 2020 will be a global celebration of sustainability and innovation within the luxury industry. At the Awards, Marcolin Group will sponsor the Innovation of the Year Award. In an announcement, Marcolin Group said the award “identifies true innovators taking an entirely new approach to their service, product, technology or business model, improving their social or environmental performance while also offering large scale improvements internally and externally.”

Proof Eyewear continues its commitment to sustainability which is at the core of the Idaho-based company founded in 2011. All Proof frames



Supporting the activities of Do Good has been a long term part of Proof’s mission.

are created using eco-friendly materials, including sustainably sourced wood, biodegradable cotton-based acetate, and recycled aluminum. In addition, \$10 of each frame purchase goes directly to the company’s **Do Good** Program, which gives back to various local and global projects, an initiative that continues to expand.

Many more companies have committed to sustainability materials and/or causes for their businesses. Among these are **Solo Eyewear**, **Thema**, **Silhouette neubau**, **Genusee**, **Barton Perreira**, **OVVO Optics**, **Luxottica’s Arnette**, **OGI** and **Fellow Earthlings**.

As things develop into 2021, watch for expanded *Vision Monday* and *VMAIL* coverage of these initiatives and collections. ■



Marcolin has partnered with the Positive Luxury Initiative.



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Contact Lens Companies Adapt Corporate and Product Manufacturing Sustainability Goals

NEW YORK—Around the world and increasing in the U.S., major contact lens companies have continued to articulate and escalate their commitment to sustainability goals and are communicating those messages more frequently to both providers and patients. As *VM* has reported, according to the AOA, many patients are unaware that there is an environmentally friendly way to dispose of their worn contact lenses.

The organization cited a 2018 Arizona State University study which found “as many as 1 in 5 contact lens wearers dispose of their lenses down the sink or toilet, contributing an estimated 6 to 10 metric tons of plastic lenses to U.S. wastewater each year. Furthermore, those lenses break down into microplastics at treatment plants, posing a risk to marine organisms and the food supply, researchers claimed.”

Earlier this month, Bausch + Lomb reported that its exclusive ONE by ONE Recycling program has recycled nearly 27 million used contact lenses, top foils and blister packs since launching in November 2016. The program, made possible through a collaboration with TerraCycle, a world leader in the collection and repurposing of hard-to-recycle post-consumer waste, has diverted more than 162,000 pounds of contact lens waste from oceans, lakes, streams and landfills.

“As a leader in the eye health industry and the originator of the first soft contact lens, we are proud to provide the ONE by ONE Recycling program to contact lens wearers to help prevent these used materials from ending up in our environment,” said John Ferris, general manager, U.S. Vision Care, Bausch + Lomb.

“In addition, as part of our overall approach to sustainability, we continually evaluate the full life cycle of our lenses. In fact, many of our contact lenses, including Biotrue ONEday daily disposables, are manufactured in facilities that have adopted zero-waste-to-landfill initiatives and have achieved diversion rates of 94 percent to 99 percent during the past few years, further supporting our long-

standing commitment to doing all we can to lessen our company’s overall environmental footprint.”

Today, more than 5,500 optometry practices are registered with the ONE by ONE Recycling program. To participate, contact lens wearers can bring their used contact lenses and packaging to one of these offices, which collects the used lens materials in a custom recycling bin provided by Bausch + Lomb. Once the bin is filled, the optometry practice will ship the materials to TerraCycle for proper recycling using a pre-paid shipping label.

Additionally, for every 10 pounds of material received from the ONE by ONE Recycling Program, TerraCycle donates \$10 to Optometry Giving Sight. More details are posted at www.BauschRecycles.com

In 2019, Bausch + Lomb took the program one step further by repurposing the recycled waste and combining it with other recycled material to create custom training modules that were donated to the Guide Dog Foundation, a national not-for-profit that trains guide dogs for people who are blind or visually impaired.

CooperVision continues to expand its commitment to sustainability as a company. Its parent company, The Cooper Companies, has aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global framework and action plan intended to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity and peace for all by 2030.

In addition, CooperVision is manufacturing its clarity 1 day lenses at its LEEDS certified facility in Costa Rica, a tropical country that has transformed itself to 98 percent renewable energy sources. The Alajuela facility, which hosted a visit from some 20 ECPs over a year ago also highlighted initiatives the company has underway as part of its stepped-up efforts toward sustainability, including recycling efforts and packaging programs, too.

Johnson & Johnson Vision Care also has initiated contact lens recycling programs in Europe with TerraCycle, has revamped its contact lens packaging and its efforts are part of a broader company-wide position embracing sustainability as it impacts energy,

Recycling and sustainability is more visible at all the major contact lens companies, among them Bausch + Lomb and CooperVision.

company waste reduction, manufacturing systems, and other investments. The company’s website emphasizes the company’s goals as part of its corporate social responsibility missions. Read more about it at www.jvision.com/corporate-social-responsibility.

At Alcon, the company has developed and issued a sustainable packaging guide for their packing design teams, utilized best practice packaging case examples, shared among designers across the company. Alcon has also made sure the company’s design and development program ensures products are manufactured and placed on the market in conformance with global product-related legislation, including EU Medical Device Regulation, REACH, RoHS, Packaging Waste and global equivalents.

To help bolster awareness around proper contact lens disposal, the AOA’s Contact Lens and Cornea Section (CLCS) developed a resource to help doctors educate their patients. ■

Eyewear Companies and Designers Look Toward Sustainable Materials

NEW YORK—In the world of eyewear materials, there have been many innovations in the creation and use of sustainable materials to be used in the design and fabrication of eyeglass frames. In February of this year, one major wide-scale development in the direction of a circular economy came to light when *VM* reported that global specialty plastics provider, Eastman (NYSE:EMN) a \$9.3 billion global specialty materials company, announced an industry-first collaboration with Mazzucchelli 1849, the world leader in the manufacturing and distribution of acetate sheet for premium eyewear.

Mazzucchelli will produce and sell acetate sheets made from Eastman Acetate Renew, a cellulose diacetate composed of 60 percent biobased and 40 percent certified recycled content. Made through Eastman's innovative carbon renewal technology, Acetate Renew offers virgin material performance, incorporates significant amounts of certified recycled content from eyewear production scrap, and results in a significant reduction in greenhouse gases when compared to the traditional manufacturing process, the company said.

"Eastman's collaboration with Mazzucchelli demonstrates our ability to leverage groundbreaking recycling technologies that bring innovative and sustainable solutions to the industries in which we participate," said Scott Ballard, vice president and general manager for Eastman Specialty Plastics. "We're honored that our longtime partner Mazzucchelli will be the first to produce acetate sheet made from entirely sustainable acetate flake and to divert waste from landfills in the process."

Mazzucchelli is providing acetate scrap to Eastman for use in carbon renewal. Eastman will soon begin collecting and recycling scrap at scale from eyewear manufacturers for conversion into new material, creating a true closed loop for the eyewear industry. The recycled content in Acetate Renew will be certified using the mass balance approach through International Sustainability & Carbon Certification (ISCC) audits across the value chain, the companies said.

Mazzucchelli has begun the ISCC process with ICIM s.p.a. Italy in preparation for commercialization. "Eastman Acetate Renew allows us to offer sustainable options to our customers," said Giovanni Orsi Mazzucchelli, president and shareholder of Mazzucchelli, a family-owned company for six generations.

Carbon renewal technology is a chemical recycling process combining mixed waste plastics with heat, pressure and steam to generate syngas—carbon and hydrogen atoms—for use as building blocks to produce a variety of circular products containing high levels of recycled content without compromising quality.



Marchon's Nicola Zotta (l) and Eastman's Scott Ballard.

Acetate scrap from Mazzucchelli and certified frame manufacturers will be returned to Eastman to be converted into new acetate flake using chemical recycling technology.

In 2019, Eastman became the first company to begin commercial-scale chemical recycling for a broad set of waste plastics that would otherwise be landfilled or, worse, end up in the environment. Eastman Advanced Circular Recycling technologies process waste plastics traditional mechanical recycling methods cannot—including polyesters, polypropylene, polyethylene, and polystyrene—derived from a variety of sources, including single-use packaging, textiles, and carpet. These technologies provide a true circular solution of infinite recycling for materials, allowing them to be reused repeatedly.

Last month, another announcement surfaced.

EASTMAN

Marchon Eyewear, Inc., one of the world's largest manufacturers and distributors of eyewear and sunwear, talked about an industry-first partnership with Eastman. Marchon will be the first eyewear company to produce and sell frames using Eastman Acetate Renew.

"We are very proud to announce our partnership with Eastman," said Nicola Zotta, president and CEO of Marchon Eyewear. "This relationship will be beneficial for us, as it will significantly reduce waste and greenhouse gas emissions, while maintaining our commitment to safety and sustainability without compromising the quality of our frames."

"This collaboration with Marchon marks a significant milestone for advancing a circular economy for the eyewear industry," said Scott Ballard, vice president and general manager for Eastman Specialty Plastics.

"With Acetate Renew, Eastman combines its 80-year history of material innovations for eyewear with technologies that help ensure the industry's sustainability in the 21st century. We are proud

to join with Marchon to introduce eyewear made of 100 percent sustainable material produced using advanced recycling technologies," he said. ■



Mazzucchelli 1849 is now producing and selling acetate sheets made from Eastman Acetate Renew.

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cus on sustainability over the past five years. Since 2014, global sustainable and environmentally responsible investment is up 68 percent and now tops USD 30 trillion. More and more, awareness of global environmental issues is changing the habits of consumers wherever they live.

“Sustainability has reached a tipping point. As consumers increasingly embrace social causes, they seek products and brands that align with their values.”

- NRF/IBM Business Values Study

Already, substantial numbers of people have adopted a back-to-basics mindset, opting for products that are simple, fresh, and contain fewer or no preservatives or processed elements. These attitudes are driving brand choice, says NRF/IBM Business Values. Over 7 in 10 consumers say it's at least moderately important that brands offer “clean” products (78 percent), are sustainable and environmentally responsible (77 percent), support recycling (76 percent), or use natural ingredients (72 percent).

Business leaders will also want to recognize that old, stereotypical ideas are moving on. Sustainability priorities transcend age, new studies validate. While Millennials may be leading the charge in sustainability awareness, every age group indicates that sustainability, environmental, and/or personal wellness attributes are significant considerations in selecting brands while Gen Zers cite health and wellness as their top priority, clean products are most important for the other groups. Interestingly, natural/organic attributes are of lower importance across age groups.

Still more comes from the new 11th Annual PwC/Consumer Insights Report 2020: The Consumer is Transformed. “The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the pace of behavioral changes around the world—how people work, eat, communicate, play and learn. And this extends to consumption patterns, too, in every category, including groceries, entertainment, health care and even data. It's important for consumer companies of all kinds to

understand the degree to which the current customer journey has already changed, and just how different it might still become.”

The report explained, “The acceleration of consumer trends and behavior that was already underway prior to the COVID-19 outbreak has taken another leap forward.” Research showed a clear

embrace of sustainability and a sense of civic duty. For example, in survey results taken prior to the pandemic, 45 percent of our global respondents said they avoid the use of plastic whenever possible, 43 percent expect businesses to be accountable for their environmental impact, and 41 percent expect retailers to eliminate plastic bags and packaging for perishable items.

Steve Barr, global consumer markets leader for PwC U.S. said, “While certain trends have been on the upswing for quite some time, our research shows that the pandemic has sharpened consumers' desire for transparency, sustainability and convenience. The companies that will reap the most rewards are the ones that have established trust with the consumer, invested in a seamless and frictionless end-to-end customer purchase journey and prioritized the consumers' health and safety.”

Oz Ozturk, global consumer markets advisory leader for PwC U.K. said, “In our 11 years of surveying consumers around the globe, we have never documented such a clear convergence of themes around transparency, sustainability, and social consciousness. At such a pivotal moment, the need for consumer-facing companies to establish trust with potential customers could not be any clearer.” To download the full report, visit www.pwc.com/consumerinsights.

A substantial proportion of U.S. consumers have become more focused on sustainability in their shopping journey due to Covid-19, according to

another new survey by Coresight Research. In a survey of consumers last August, Coresight found that 29 percent of respondents said the pandemic has made environmental sustainability more of a factor when shopping. This compares to 16 percent that stated that the crisis made sustainability less of a factor.

Coresight also asked consumers what they consider to be the most important sustainability issues for retailers. Reducing plastics took the lead. Packaging is a huge concern for consumers in terms of sustainability. Making packaging biodegradable, recyclable or reusable was ranked the second-most important sustainability action for retailers, followed by reducing packaging.

Tracker information from Coresight is posted at <https://coresight.com/coronavirus-briefing/>.

Forrester's Oliwia Berdak, VP research director, recently wrote an article titled, “Rethinking Sustainability in the Middle of a Pandemic.” <https://go.forrester.com/blogs/rethinking-sustainability-in-the-middle-of-a-pandemic/>. She stated, “Sustainability has become a business necessity, not just a differentiator. In the coming years, businesses will

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- Steve Barr, global consumer markets leader for PwC U.S.

need to adapt to a host of new environmental, social and governance risks or face extinction. It is no longer a question of whether it is ‘necessary or not’ to launch sustainable business practices, but rather how long it will take before consumers, shareholders, or governments punish businesses that don't.”

The optical industry is seriously starting to pay attention, through the commitment of small independent practices and eyecare providers, regional groups, national companies or eyewear producers, small and large. VM will continue to monitor this space, due to continued changes surely coming our way in 2021. ■